



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

STATE HOUSE • BOSTON, MA 02133

(617) 725-4000

CHARLES D. BAKER
GOVERNOR

KARYN E. POLITO
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

November 4, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Over the past several weeks, I have learned of your Administration's potential designation of one or more National Marine Monument(s) in the Northwest Atlantic (offshore of New England). While the protection of critical marine habitats is a goal shared by many—including my Administration—significant questions and concerns have been raised regarding this possible designation, and I wish to convey my Administration's apprehension as to both the process being implemented and the effects of such a unilateral declaration.

I have questions and concerns about the process for the current proposal for National Marine Monument(s) for the deep-sea canyons and seamounts, as well as areas not included in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) public notice, such as Cashes Ledge. My Administration has been unable to determine how these areas were identified and selected. NOAA held a single public meeting in Providence, Rhode Island, and I believe that this falls far short of any meaningful stakeholder process.

The Commonwealth is a full and active participant in two regional ocean management governance processes that include important components of marine habitat characterization and the protection of important ecological areas. The recent work of the New England Fisheries Management Council and the first-ever regional ocean planning initiative under your Administration's National Ocean Policy both serve as vital forums for the collective management of our region's oceans. They are stakeholder-based, informed by rigorous science, and provide for robust public input.

In April of this year, after significant deliberations and debate with input from fishermen, scientists, public officials, regulators, and other stakeholders, the New England Fishery Management Council approved a marine habitat plan (Omnibus Habitat Amendment 2) under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This plan continues long-standing protections for a

large area covering Cashes Ledge and extending many miles beyond. The Council is actively working on extending similar protections to the New England Canyons through the Deep-Sea Coral Amendment.

Modeled on the ground-breaking work of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, a regional ocean-planning process has been formally underway in the Northeast since 2012. The National Ocean Policy of 2010 called for the formation of regionally-focused entities to better manage the nation's oceans and coasts, and New England was the first region in the Nation to respond to this call, developing the Northeast Regional Planning Body, which includes representatives from the six New England states, ten federally recognized tribes, ten federal agencies, and the New England Fishery Management Council. The Northeast Regional Planning Body has been working on the development of an ocean plan and has formally adopted the following principles for ocean planning: meaningful public participation; sound science; a comprehensive, ecosystem-based approach; transparent, efficient government decision-making; and adaptive management. The Northeast Regional Planning Body is on-track to submit the Nation's first-ever regional ocean plan to the National Ocean Council next year.

I am very concerned that the proposed marine protected area designation will undermine the ongoing New England Fishery Management Council and Northeast Regional Planning Body. Their work, plans, and processes are underway, and will jeopardize already strained relationships with important stakeholders, including commercial and recreational fishermen. The proposed National Marine Monument designation is inconsistent with and contrary to the process and principles of the ongoing regional ocean planning initiative.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and I look forward to a robust public dialogue about these designations going forward.

Sincerely—



CHARLES D. BAKER
GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS

cc: Senator Elizabeth Warren
Senator Ed Markey
Representative Richard E. Neal
Representative Jim McGovern
Representative Niki Tsongas

Representative Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Representative Katherine Clark
Representative Seth Moulton
Representative Michael E. Capuano
Representative Stephen F. Lynch
Representative William Keating
Secretary Matthew Beaton